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# International Year of Mountains, 2002

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits to the General Assembly a report prepared by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 55/189 of 20 December 2000 and 57/245 of 20 December 2002.

*Summary*

The report describes achievements made at the national, regional and international levels throughout 2002, with an emphasis on activities that ensured that the International Year of Mountains, 2002, was more than a communications event but a catalyst for long-term, concrete action for sustainable mountain development. It also highlights the challenges that lie beyond the Year and provides suggestions for consideration by the General Assembly as to how countries might continue to promote and effectively implement sustainable development in mountain regions around the world.

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# I. Introduction

1. The idea of proposing "mountains" as a theme for an international year was first put forward by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic at an international conference entitled "Mountain research — challenges for the 21st century", convened in Bishkek in 1996. It was subsequently officially presented to the United Nations Secretary-General and received strong support in the Economic and Social Council.

2. The General Assembly, at its fifty-third session in 1998, adopted resolution 53/24, in which it proclaimed 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. The resolution encouraged Governments, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development. It also called upon Governments, national and international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to make voluntary contributions in accordance with the guidelines of the Economic and Social Council for international years and anniversaries and to lend other forms of support to the Year.

3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to serve as the lead agency for the Year, in collaboration with Governments, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs.

4. The present report is submitted in compliance with the request of the General Assembly in resolution 57/245 that the Secretary-General report to it at its fifty-eighth session on the achievements of the Year, under a sub-item entitled "Sustainable mountain development" of the item entitled "Environment and sustainable development". It was prepared by FAO in its capacity as lead agency for the Year and in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs.

# II. Background

5. Awareness of the importance of mountain ecosystems and communities has increased since the adoption of chapter 13 of Agenda 21, entitled "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development", at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

6. There is now increasing recognition that mountains are fragile ecosystems, which are globally important as the source of most of the Earth's freshwater, repositories of rich biological diversity, popular destinations for recreation and tourism and areas of important cultural diversity, knowledge and heritage. Covering about one quarter of the world's land surface, mountains provide a direct life-support base for about 12 per cent of the world's population, as well as essential goods and services to more than half of humankind. Yet, many of the world's most impoverished and food-insecure people live in mountain regions. Consequently, there is a need to ensure the ecological health and the economic and social improvement of mountain areas, for the sake of both mountain inhabitants, whose livelihood opportunities and overall well-being are at stake, and of people living in

lowland areas. As high-energy environments, mountains are recognized as being a stage for natural disasters. By integrating disaster reduction into the broader context of sustainable development, mountain people can ensure that they reduce their own risk and vulnerabilities to these negative impacts.

7. The decision of the General Assembly to observe an international year dedicated to mountains provided a unique opportunity to address the complexity, diversity and magnitude of mountain issues. The real challenge of the International Year of Mountains lay in consolidating and building on the many efforts so far undertaken to protect and develop mountain regions and, in particular, to focus observance of the Year on long-term action that would improve the quality of life in mountain communities and protect fragile mountain environments for generations to come. It is clear that concerted and coordinated action is needed to develop and reinforce the institutional and human capability to continue sustainable mountain development efforts far beyond 2002. Thus, the Year was intended to be more than a series of events and activities. It was, rather, a springboard for launching new and strengthening existing long-term mountain development and conservation efforts.

# III. The national and regional stage

## A. National committees

8. Following the proclamation by the General Assembly of the International Year of Mountains, and in accordance with Economic and Social Council guidelines for the observance of international years, the Director-General of FAO encouraged countries to establish multi-stakeholder national committees or other mechanisms to plan and implement national observance of the Year.

9. The national response to the International Year of Mountains was tremendous. As of December 2002, 78 national committees or similar mechanisms had been established for observance of the International Year of Mountains in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and North Africa and North America. Many of these national committees had a broad-based membership of stakeholders, including representatives of national government agencies, mountain people, grass-roots organizations, NGOs, civil society, academic and research institutions, the private sector, United Nations agencies, and decentralized authorities. In some countries the national committee for the International Year of Mountains was the first and sole national mechanism for the sustainable development of mountains and the multi-disciplinary composition of the committee provided an opportunity to implement a holistic approach to mountains for the first time.

10. Action at the country level made a significant contribution to the success of the International Year of Mountains and has ensured that a growing network of Governments, organizations, major groups and individuals around the world know that mountains are vital to life. Activities generating awareness of the importance of mountains and the need to protect them included national seminars, concerts, expeditions, school competitions and nationwide television and radio broadcasts. Countries issued commemorative stamps, phone cards and books. Thirty national committees established special International Year of Mountains Web sites to widen dialogue, exchange information and promote country-level action.

11. National committees were encouraged to continue operating beyond 2002 to help develop and implement sustainable development strategies, policies and laws designed to respond to the specific needs, priorities and conditions of the mountain areas of the respective countries. Reports from countries following the 2002 observance of the International Year of Mountains suggest that many national committees established for the Year have evolved — or are considering evolving — into permanent bodies. However, to do so, many national committees will require significant support in the areas of communications, capacity-building, information, strategic planning, policy development, expert consultation and financial resources.

12. It is beyond the scope of the present report to describe the multitude of events, activities and initiatives undertaken within the context of the International Year of Mountains. The following summary highlights the key areas of interest and the priority themes addressed across regions during the Year.

## B. Africa

13. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, 22 national committees were established for observance of the International Year of Mountains in Africa, in the following countries: Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

14. National committees in Africa coordinated a wide range of activities to spread the key messages of the Year, from organizing sponsored climbs to tree planting on degraded mountain sites. In Lesotho, a national symposium on mountain ecosystems attracted rural community representatives who began initiatives in biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. In Ghana a celebration of chiefs and mountain people was organized on a specially designated National Mountains Day, which drew attention to improper farming practices and the indiscriminate exploitation of bushmeat.

15. The Year saw much progress made in the further development of research- and information-sharing networks, which are disseminating lessons learned and knowledge on sustainable mountain development to a wide constituency on the African continent and beyond. These networks, although created prior to 2002, have largely benefited from the impetus generated by the International Year of Mountains. The African Mountains Association, for example, is establishing forums for enhancing and sharing scientific information on African mountains and highland ecosystems. In August 2002, in collaboration with the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, it hosted the sixth International Conference on Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa: Agenda for Action, in the United Republic of Tanzania.

16. The environmental agenda in Africa was further advanced in several areas by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. Its ninth session in Uganda in July 2002 produced the Kampala Declaration on the Environment for Development. This complemented the various joint projects and programmes under way to counter land degradation in African highlands and conserve them for water resources in such ranges as the Eastern Arc mountains, the Drakensberg, Rwenzori and Fouta Djallon. An integrated conservation programme for the ecosystem of the Nimba Mountains is being implemented through a tri-national programme by Côte

d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia. By the end of the Year, several African committees, such as the one in Cameroon, were preparing national programmes and projects on mountain ecosystems and mountain-related issues, while Madagascar succeeded in preparing a national strategy for mountain development.

## C. Asia and the Pacific

17. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, 14 national committees were established for the observance of the Year in Asia and the Pacific, in the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

18. Linking ecotourism with the conservation and sustainable development of mountains was a major focus in the region. In honour of the International Year of Mountains, Nepal established the Mountain Botanical Garden to promote germplasm conservation of high altitude plants in the country and attract national and international tourists, and created the Shivapuri National Park. In Bhutan in situ orchid and rhododendron gardens were established as educational, recreational and conservation centres. In Sri Lanka, a biodiversity complex located on the biodiversity-rich mountain of Ambuluwawa was the latest addition to the country's national botanical gardens. However, the potentially damaging effects of tourism were highlighted in many national initiatives. In the Republic of Korea a clean-up campaign was conducted in many mountainous areas, with the participation of about 60,000 forest officials, members of the Korean alpine club and the local community. In Pakistan, a clean-up drive in the mountainous Ayubia National Park removed more than two tons of non-biodegradable waste.

19. Many national committees identified mountain forests as priority areas for action. In the Philippines, the Negros Committee for the International Year of Mountains was a key participant in the ongoing advocacy campaign to prosecute illegal loggers in forests of the region. In the Republic of Korea, the Korea Forest Service, which acted as the primary mechanism for the Year, developed the Forest Management Law of 30 December 2002.

20. Many regionally based organizations are initiating programmes and projects in countries in the region and building a mountain focus into their ongoing programmes. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, headquartered in Nepal, is undertaking many projects and addressing problems in the mountains of the Hindu-Kush Himalayas. In addition, it hosts the Asia-Pacific Mountain Network, a regional node of Mountain Forum, as well as the global secretariat for Mountain Forum. During the International Year of Mountains it sponsored and co-organized many events — most notably the Celebrating Mountain Women conference in Bhutan (see para. 57 below) — in the Asian and Pacific region.

## D. Europe

21. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, 16 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the Year were established in Europe, in the following countries: Andorra, Armenia,

Austria, Croatia, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro,[1] Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine. A committee with broad-based NGO and government support was established in Scotland (United Kingdom). In addition, many European countries, such as Switzerland, identified focal points for concerted action throughout the Year.

22. Tourism and cultural heritage were a focus of many activities in Europe. In Croatia mountaineering facilities were reconstructed on the country's highest mountain, Dinara, and a committee was established to promote it. In Austria, a chain of fires was lit from the eastern frontier of the Alps to the Swiss border at the summer solstice. In Italy, "The Olympic Games of Mountain Cheeses" in November 2002 was the first competition-exhibition on a world scale exclusively reserved for mountain cheeses.

23. Many countries had national strategies and programmes, planned or ongoing, for sustainable mountain development in the region. In 2002, Turkey launched the Mountain Areas National Action Plan involving the participation of a wide cross-section of government institutions, agencies and NGOs. Spain drafted a Spanish Mountain Charter for the future development of its mountain regions and communities. In Romania, a Mountain Law was drafted. In Italy, the International Year of Mountains provided impetus for the reformulation of the mountain law to include a focus on marginalized areas within mountain systems. At the close of the Year, preparations for the establishment of a foundation, Fondazione Italiana per le Montagne, the successor arrangement to the Italian national committee for the International Year of Mountains, were also under way.

24. The forthcoming expansion of the European Union to incorporate new member States clearly has implications for mountains in the region. At the Third European Mountain Convention convened by Euromontana in Inverness, United Kingdom, from 16 to 18 May 2002, representatives of more than 20 European countries explored the preparation of forthcoming reforms related to the expansion: the Common Agricultural Policy (for reform in 2005) and the European Regional Policy (for reform in 2006) and the threats and opportunities for European mountain territories. The European Commission held a seminar dedicated entirely to mountain issues in Brussels from 17 to 18 October 2002.

25. Processes for regional and interregional cooperation were advanced in 2002 by both the International Association for the Protection of the Alps and UNEP. For example, two major meetings were held in June on the possible application of the Alpine Convention to other mountain regions. The meeting in Bolzano, Italy, focused on the Carpathians, while the international conference, "The Alpine Process — an Approach for other Mountain Regions?" in Berchtesgaden, Germany, reflected on the Alps, the Caucasus, the Carpathians, the Hindu Kush-Himalaya, the Central Asian mountain regions and the Altai, and produced the Berchtesgaden Declaration. In November, Innsbruck, Austria, was selected as the location of the permanent secretariat of the Alpine Convention.

26. Various cross-border initiatives were implemented jointly in the Sudety and Carpathian Mountains, which stretch across seven countries of Eastern and Central Europe: Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. Poland prepared the "Carpathian Red List of Endangered Species" as a result of a university research programme financed by the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative and WWF. The national committee in Ukraine supported a

WWF-funded project to protect endangered brown bears in the same mountain range. Carpathian countries also provided input to the common "Mountain Challenge Statement" which calls for a strengthening of a common European trans-sectoral approach to the management of mountains, building on existing policy statements and initiatives. The statement was to be presented at the Kiev ECO-Forum 2003 and the fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", where the Carpathian Convention was to be signed by the Governments of the region. UNEP is expected to provide the interim secretariat of the Convention.

## E. Latin America and the Caribbean

27. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, 14 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the International Year of Mountains were established in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.

28. Action in Latin America and the Caribbean was wide-ranging and has been highly influential in mountain development within the region and beyond. Notable contributions from the region to and during the Year included the Cusco Declaration of 2001 and the Huaraz Declaration, which was issued at the Second International Meeting of Mountain Ecosystems, held in Huaraz, Peru, from 12 to 14 June 2002. Much of the activities in the Latin American and Caribbean region were mobilized or organized by dynamic networks, in particular the Andean Mountains Association, the Technical Cooperation Network on Upper Watershed Management in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), Crescente Fértil, the Network of Sustainable Development and the Environment (REDESMA) and the International Potato Center (CIP). A key agent for communication and information exchange in the region is the Latin American node of the Mountain Forum, which also provided substantive support to the establishment of national committees for the International Year of Mountains in Latin America.

29. Civil society is playing an active role in mountain development initiatives in many countries in the region. Bolivia produced an important "Document of political priorities for the development of mountain ecosystems" aimed at the public and private sectors and civil society. In Peru, the National Working Group on Mountain Ecosystems (GNTEM) was created by the Government as a mechanism of coordination between the State and civil society. GNTEM is now being decentralized and regional subgroupings representing different mountain zones of Peru are appearing. The Group is preparing a National Agenda for Mountains to 2020 and has also been involved in the implementation of a Plan of Action on Mountain Biodiversity and the preparation of methodologies for mountain ecosystems in the tropical Andes (at the subregional Andes level).

30. In Mexico, the National Committee for the International Year of Mountains was engaged in various poverty reduction activities to provide food and training and help in long-term planning. The Committee is strongly committed to sustaining synergies with institutions, working on a mountain programme and drawing up a

sustainable mountain development plan for the next 25 years. It has developed a mountain agenda based on 178 activities with substantial investment.

31. The strong links between mountains and water were addressed by many countries in the region in 2002 and are set to continue to be addressed in 2003, which was proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of Freshwater. For example, Cuba developed a programme of fact-finding expeditions to the mountain sources of 295 rivers. This was undertaken not only to create public awareness of the source of freshwater but also to evaluate its conservation status, meet the needs of local populations and develop recommendations for the care and protection of river sources in the country.

## F. Near East and North Africa

32. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, 10 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the Year were established in the Near East and North Africa, in the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.

33. Mountains are an important part of the social, economic and cultural life of countries in the Near East and North African region and the various activities and initiatives undertaken within the context of the International Year of Mountains created greater understanding of their value. The Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia implemented far-reaching public awareness campaigns, particularly through the print and broadcast media.

34. In this region, more typically than in any other, mountains influence the availability of water and help agriculture under conditions that would otherwise be considered completely dry. The International Year of Mountains focused greater attention on the regional processes under way to strengthen water management. For example, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey are embarking on a regional watershed management training project to build capacity to manage watersheds effectively. In Yemen, a nationwide project on watershed management and forestry has a strong potential for supporting and enlarging the country's initiatives to implement chapter 13.

35. Mountain tourism is of increasing concern in the region. The role of mountainous forest areas in economic development and in particular ecotourism was the subject of a workshop in Syria, where the number of visitors to forest sites has increased over recent years. The possibility of organizing the numerous forest sites in Syria for environmental tourism was discussed and areas identified. The cultural heritage of the Al Salamyeh area was defined in particular in efforts to determine ecotourism that would respect and improve the livelihood of the local populations.

36. One of the most striking achievements of the International Year of Mountains was that mountains were integrated into and placed at the forefront of national agendas. Morocco is at present preparing legislation for mountain conservation and development, covering such key issues as infrastructure development and watershed development. Lebanon is in the process of finalizing a National Action Plan for the Fight against Desertification and there is an opportunity to integrate mountain issues into this general plan. In Jordan, the Agriculture Development Strategy 2002-2010

includes many projects related to sustainable mountain development. In Kyrgyzstan, the Government has ratified a National Strategy and Action Plan on the sustainable development of mountain regions of the country.

### G. North America

37. Many activities to observe the Year were initiated in North America, particularly through the coordinated efforts of Parks Canada, Mountain Culture at the Banff Centre in Canada, and through the U.S. Department of State and The Mountain Institute in the United States of America.

38. The Mountain Institute played a key role in organizing the global launch of the International Year of Mountains at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 2001, in association with the International Year of Mountains Focus Group[2] and FAO. The Banff Centre, the only learning centre in Canada dedicated to the arts, leadership development and mountain culture, organized a wide variety of events celebrating the Year with the global mountain community, most notably at the Banff Mountain Summit 2002 — Extreme Landscape: Challenge and Celebration (27-29 October 2002) and at Ecological and Earth Sciences in Mountain Areas (10-14 June, 2002), both held at the Banff Centre in Alberta.

39. The Banff Centre, The Mountain Institute and the Mexican Indigenous Association for Sustainable Development established a regional Mountain Forum node to serve Canada, the United States of America and Mexico. The North American Mountain Forum is currently hosted and maintained by Mountain Culture at the Banff Centre.

40. Parks Canada made a significant contribution to the Year through its heritage tourism strategy initiative in and around national parks in western and northern Canada, in which more than 100 partner organizations created several hundred events and programmes to engage visitors in understanding and appreciating mountains.

41. The International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) held its general assembly in Flagstaff, Arizona in October 2002 to review the crucial links made between sport and sustainable mountain development during the Year through its global network of 90 member associations.

## IV. The global stage

### A. The International Partnership and the Bishkek Mountain Platform

42. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, an alliance of national Governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs announced that they would work in partnership to achieve the mountain-specific goals of the Summit.[3] These goals focus on reducing poverty and on food security in mountain communities and on protecting the world's fragile mountain ecosystems from the various threats posed to their freshwater systems and biodiversity.

43. The launching of this partnership, the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, was a major outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development with respect to mountains, as well as a significant achievement of the International Year of Mountains. It also signaled the formalization of a decade-long evolving partnership of diverse organizations and individuals committed to sustainable mountain development.

44. The purpose of the Partnership, which was initiated by the Government of Switzerland, FAO and UNEP, is to enable more effective implementation of chapter 13 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation. It will build on the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains, which has been the main inter-organizational mechanism to advise on the implementation of chapter 13, as well as on the planning and implementation of the Year. The Partnership aims to encourage and promote alliances that link global, national and local initiatives for sustainable mountain development which manage mountain ecosystems and address chronic poverty in mountain regions through concrete programmes and projects. The Partnership is conceived as an evolving alliance with the flexibility to address the complexity, diversity and magnitude of mountain issues. It will be structured to ensure multi-stakeholder and long-term approaches.

45. The Partnership will develop and strengthen policy initiatives at the international level with the aim of supporting national initiatives and promoting cooperation and partnership between major stakeholders, such as government agencies of both donor and recipient countries, implementing agencies, NGOs, the private sector, the academic and research community and mountain communities themselves. Given the transboundary character of many mountain areas, linking global, national and local efforts will be essential for long-term sustainable development.[4]

46. At the launching of the International Partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Director-General of FAO offered to host a small secretariat at FAO to support the International Partnership. This multi-stakeholder secretariat could include secondments and other resource allocations from intergovernmental institutions, Governments and civil society, but would be anchored by the support of a strong institution. By the end of 2002, the proposal for a secretariat at FAO had received increasingly widespread acceptance.

47. The Partnership was reinforced at the culminating event of the International Year of Mountains, the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, held in Bishkek from 28 October to 1 November 2002. Summit participants issued a declaration called the Bishkek Mountain Platform which affirmed the Partnership's principles, recommendations and commitments and built on the outcomes of the major events that occurred in the period leading up to and during the International Year of Mountains.

48. The Bishkek Mountain Platform formulates recommendations for concrete action towards sustainable mountain development, providing guidance to Governments and others on how to improve the livelihoods of mountain people, protect mountain ecosystem, and use mountain resources more wisely. The Platform was circulated as a document of the United Nations General Assembly at the fifty-seventh session (under agenda item 86, Sustainable development and international economic cooperation). The Platform should serve as a contribution to debate in the

General Assembly of the United Nations and to the achievement of the Millennium Goals.

## B. Major global events

**World Mountain Symposium 2001: Community Development between Subsidy, Subsidiarity and Sustainability**

49. The four-day symposium, held in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 30 September to 4 October 2001, supported preparations for the Year, with an emphasis on determining ways and means to enhance autonomous development in mountains of the industrialized, developing and transition countries of the world. This conference of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation was facilitated by the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Berne.

**International Conference of Mountain Children**

50. Children from 13 to 18 years of age met from 7 to 21 May 2002 in Uttaranchal, India, at a conference organized by Research Advocacy and Communication in Himalayan Areas to discuss the needs of mountain children, provide recommendations for the Bishkek Mountain Platform and launch the Mountain Children's Forum. This Internet-based forum is a platform for children to represent themselves and contributed to the Global Movement for Children, an initiative highlighted at the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2002.

**High Summit 2002: International Conference around the Continents' Highest Mountains**

51. Mountain people, scientists and representatives of NGOs, United Nations agencies and the media participated in simultaneous transcontinental, multimedia regional conferences near some of the world's highest peaks in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America from 6 to 10 May 2002. Sponsored by the Italian National Committee for the International Year of Mountains, the event used Internet and videoconference technology to support an international debate and to develop recommendations for action on five key aspects of mountain development: water, culture, economy, risk and policy.

**Second International Meeting of Mountain Ecosystems, "Peru, country of mountains, towards 2020: water, life and production"**

52. Indigenous people from Peru and Ecuador, representatives of mountain communities in the Himalayas and many others met in Huaraz, Peru, from 12 to 14 June 2002 at a conference organized by the National Committee of Peru for the International Year of Mountains to produce the Huaraz Declaration on Sustainable Development of Mountain Ecosystems.

**World Food Summit: five years later — side event on sustainable mountain development**

53. Around 120 delegates from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and national Governments attended a special side event on sustainable mountain development during the Summit held on 13 June 2002 at FAO

headquarters, Rome. The side event was organized by FAO in collaboration with the International Year of Mountains Focus Group, which presented a declaration affirming its commitment to long-term action in mountains and reinforcing its support for the emerging International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions.

**International Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions**

54. Held in Adelboden, Switzerland, from 16 to 20 June 2002, this conference, sponsored by the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture and organized in collaboration with FAO, brought together stakeholders from around the world to explore ways of enhancing cooperation in achieving the objectives of two chapters of Agenda 21, chapter 13 on sustainable mountain development and chapter 14 on sustainable agriculture and rural development, and to contribute input to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Conference participants issued the Adelboden Declaration.

**The World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg 2002**

55. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held from 26 August to 4 September 2002, delegates reviewed progress made on chapter 13 over the past decade and launched the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, an alliance of countries, intergovernmental organizations and major groups.

**Second World Meeting of Mountain Populations**

56. Representatives of 115 countries discussed the challenges facing mountain communities worldwide at a conference in Quito, Ecuador, from 20 to 24 September 2002 organized by the Association of Mountain Populations of the World and El Centro de Investigación de los Movimientos Sociales del Ecuador. The meeting, a follow-up to the first World Mountain Forum (Chambéry, June 2000), produced the Quito Declaration.

**Celebrating Mountain Women**

57. The four-day conference held in Thimphu, Bhutan, from 1 to 4 October 2002 was the first global gathering of mountain women and attracted 250 participants from civil society, non-governmental organizations, the news media, academia, development agencies and donors from 35 countries. Organized by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development and the Mountain Forum, the conference resulted in the Thimphu Declaration, containing recommendations for improved responses to the needs of mountain women.

**Bishkek Global Mountain Summit**

58. This culminating event of the International Year of Mountains was organized by the Government of Kyrgyzstan, with assistance from UNEP, and held from 28 October to 1 November 2002 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Participants issued the Bishkek Mountain Platform, a framework for future action in mountains.

## C. Global communications

59. During 2002 many organizations implemented global communications initiatives to raise awareness of mountain issues and solutions to mountain problems. In support of the International Year of Mountains, the Television Trust for the Environment — the world's largest distributor of environment and development issues-based programming — produced four documentaries on mountains. They were shown first on BBC World's Earth Report in October, as part of a special "mountain month" and were estimated to reach 220 million homes throughout the world. A CD-ROM with a database on all mountain world heritage sites and biosphere reserves was jointly produced by UNESCO and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre. An educational calendar on specific mountain issues was produced by Switzerland and distributed throughout 7,000 schools of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network. All of these efforts fed an emerging wave of public awareness of mountains and a global commitment to projects and programmes that would bring lasting change to mountain areas.

60. FAO, through its International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, helped to mobilize action to protect mountain ecosystems and improve the well-being of mountain people by implementing a global communications plan for the Year which was developed in collaboration with members of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains. The purpose of the plan was to facilitate a successful International Year of Mountains by translating communications strategies into actions, setting priorities, integrating and facilitating the coordination of the communication efforts of other International Year of Mountains observers and linking communications with resource mobilization.

61. Through the plan, the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit at FAO developed, promoted and widely distributed electronic and printed communication and information materials (in up to 5 languages), produced a television documentary for the BBC and launched a web site in English, French and Spanish, averaging 20,000 visitors per month. The web site was a central promotional and information tool, a news service for International Year of Mountains activities and a distribution mechanism for communications materials, including background information for journalists, educators, the public and others interested in mountain issues. A mountain events calendar was maintained by the Mountain Forum and was made accessible from both the International Year of Mountains web site and that of the Mountain Forum. The specially created International Year of Mountains web site was also the primary vehicle for distribution of an electronic monthly news bulletin, toolkits, educational materials and graphics to national committees and other partners who were implementing their own communications programmes. As a result, many national committees adapted the International Year of Mountains logo their own languages and some 30 national committees established special web sites in observance of the Year.

62. The International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit also implemented an intensive global media relations programme to build awareness of the Year's key messages through newspapers, magazines, radio and television, while its outreach programme helped NGOs, civil society and grass-roots organizations around the world communicate about mountain issues to their members and audiences. The Unit also supported the coordination, planning and implementation of major global events. These included the successful global launch of the International Year of

Mountains at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 2001, the High Summit 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit.

## D. Networking and information exchange

63. The scope of networking and information exchange about mountains at the regional and international levels has significantly progressed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, most notably through the creation of Mountain Forum in 1995.

64. Mountain Forum is an electronic network that promotes and advocates global action towards equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development. This is achieved through information exchange, mutual support and advocacy. Mountain Forum played a particularly significant role during the International Year of Mountains by enabling links between individuals, NGOs, Governments and other entities, particularly at the regional level, and by facilitating and moderating electronic consultations on the thematic papers that helped to develop the Bishkek Mountain Platform. It assisted with the establishment and operation of many national committees for the Year, conducted training sessions and participated in numerous global meetings. The Forum also maintained the official calendar of events for the Year through its Global Information Server Node hosted by The Mountain Institute. In addition, Mountain Forum is helping to adapt overall strategies to the specific conditions of different mountain areas and to ensure that information about local experiences is disseminated and shared amongst a wide audience.

65. Other regional-level networking mechanisms played an important role during the Year in strengthening cooperation across countries and regions. In Latin America, for example, the Andean Mountains Association and the Latin American Technical Cooperation Network on Watershed Management, supported by FAO, focused the skills and experience of scholars, educators, researchers and practitioners on collaborative action. The African Mountains Association, in close collaboration with Mountain Forum and other partners, performed a similar function on the African continent, as did the Asia-Pacific Mountain Network in the Asian and Pacific region. Notable examples in Europe include Euromontana, which has members in about 15 countries in all the European mountain massifs and facilitates collaboration between Western, Central and Eastern Europe and Mountain Xchange, which exchanges capacities, products and specific expertise to mountainous regions in Europe and around the world. The *Eurasia Mountain Newsletter*, published in Russian under Project 6 of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB-6), fostered networking in Russia and the newly independent States.

## E. International action

66. A large number of international organizations launched mountain-related initiatives or integrated mountains into their programmes of work for the Year and beyond.

67. Several notable global initiatives were begun and many existing projects and programmes received additional impetus as a result of the Year. FAO and other

partners such as UNESCO, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations and the European Observatory of Mountain Forests collaborated on an initiative entitled "Preparing the next generation of watershed programmes", the aim of which is to contribute to a better understanding of the current status of watershed management and provide support for the implementation of effective watershed management at the local, national and regional levels. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research renewed its system-wide Global Mountain Programme (including centres such as the International Livestock Research Institute, the International Center for Research in Agroforestry and the International Potato Center), whose activities range from empowering mountain inhabitants through the training of local professionals in the use of new tools and methods to systematizing eroding indigenous knowledge for future generations. FAO produced a study entitled "Towards a GIS-based analysis of mountain environments and populations", which finds that as many as 245 million rural mountain people in developing and transition countries may be at risk of, or actually experiencing, hunger. FAO also published a legislative study, entitled "Mountains and the law — emerging trends" and prepared a study on the importance of mountain fisheries and aquaculture. The Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, a component of the DIVERSITAS programme, published *Mountain Biodiversity — a Global Assessment*. Its secretariat is playing a key role in preparing chapter 27 (mountain systems) of the global exercise, The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Conditions and Trends. The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility and other partners, published a report entitled "Mountain watch — environmental change and sustainable development in mountains". It provides the first systematic assessment of mountain ecosystems, using a geographic information system (GIS) analysis of global data presented as a visual map-based overview. Organized by the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the 2002 World Disaster Reduction Campaign focused on the theme "Disaster reduction for sustainable mountain development", culminating in the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 9 October. The Mountain Research Initiative embarked on a research programme on biosphere reserves with UNESCO. IUCN — The World Conservation Union established a Mountain Initiative Task Force.

68. The Panos Institute launched its web site "mountain voices" with oral testimony from mountain regions around the world, backed by a series of reports. The journal, *Mountain Research and Development*, edited by the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Berne, continued to be the principal publication reporting comprehensively on mountain-related issues, including the exchange of research results, approaches and experiences.

69. The Year enhanced understanding of the need for interdisciplinary research and information-sharing about mountains and stimulated the development of a comprehensive, global research agenda on mountains that will support decision-making and policy-making in years to come. Much impetus for research in mountains was created by the Abisko Conference, held in Sweden in June 2001, which reviewed research achievements in the 10 years since Rio, identified gaps in knowledge and set priorities for mountain research, which were published in 2002. A significant follow-up during the International Year of Mountains was the United Nations University International Symposium on Conservation of Mountain Ecosystems, held in Japan in February 2002. This global research meeting released a

report on the state of the world's mountains, with specific policy recommendations, and issued the 2002 Tokyo Declaration for the International Year of Mountains, which calls on the United Nations and other international and national organizations to work in partnership to address mountain issues and to promote working links among mountain scientists, mountain communities, decision makers and the general public.

## V. Achievements

70. The International Year of Mountains was a celebration of mountain life and a springboard for long-term collaborative research and action to enhance the well-being of mountain peoples and conserve mountain ecosystems. The International Year of Mountains achieved significant results. It has ensured that a growing network of Governments, organizations, major groups and individuals around the world know that mountains are vital to life, wherever we live. In particular, the Year:

- Strengthened implementation of chapter 13 by identifying, through intensive international, regional, national and community dialogue, gaps in knowledge, ways of working and institutions
- Reinforced and expanded the alliance of organizations that are committed to implementing chapter 13 and consolidated the alliance through the launching of the voluntary International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions at the World Summit on Sustainable Development
- Focused global commitment to and resources for sustainable mountain development on a widely supported framework for action, expressed in the Bishkek Mountain Platform, to ensure more efficient and effective approaches to achieving the goals of chapter 13
- Led to the establishment, by Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, of the International Year of Mountains Focus Group,[5] which supported observance of and continues to animate follow-up to the Year
- Increased the accessibility, quantity and quality of information on mountains and mountain people, in so doing raising public awareness of the importance of mountains to the Earth's fundamental life-sustaining systems, of the fragility of mountain ecosystems, of the consequences of their degradation and of effective approaches to sustainable mountain development
- Enhanced understanding of the need for interdisciplinary research and information-sharing about mountains and stimulated the development of a comprehensive, global research agenda on mountains that will support decision-making and policy-making
- Heightened awareness of the need to safeguard and build on the traditional knowledge of mountain people and to respect indigenous practices, expertise and authorities
- Broadened understanding of the need for natural resource assessment of mountains, in particular water resources, and highlighted the need for effective watershed management at the local, national and regional levels

- Increased awareness of the necessity of developing risk management strategies for disaster reduction in unstable mountain environments
- Stimulated the establishment of 78 national committees and placed them as mechanisms for developing national strategic plans and policies to achieve sustainable mountain development
- Increased demand by countries for programmes and projects to achieve sustainable mountain development
- Increased donor interest in and support for long-term investment in mountain ecosystems and communities
- Broadened the diversity of organizations and individuals dedicated to sustainable mountain development and stimulated the development of new mountain initiatives and the integration of mountains into normative programmes
- Led to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 57/245, in which the Assembly inter alia designated 11 December as International Mountain Day, as from 11 December 2003, and encouraged the international community on that day to organize events at all levels to highlight the importance of sustainable mountain development.

## VI. Challenges

71. The key challenges to fostering the long-term action needed to implement chapter 13 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation following the International Year of Mountains are in the areas of national involvement and support to partnerships.

*National involvement*

72. The Year generated extensive national involvement in sustainable mountain development. Thanks to the efforts of the 78 national committees which led observance of the International Year of Mountains, real change in mountain regions is now a priority in countries around the world. Many countries are in the process of, or are committed to, developing and implementing national strategic plans for the sustainable development of their mountains and to participating in regional processes to protect mountain ranges. However, the future status of many committees remained unclear at the close of 2002. The survival and further development of these committees, whatever the institutional setting, may be key factors for achieving country-focused mountain development. It should also be noted that many countries with mountains did not form national committees or formally participate in the Year. The involvement of all these countries in the follow-up to the Year is crucial to achieving sustainable mountain development, given the transboundary nature of mountains and the reality that only countries have the power to implement national mountain strategies, to enact enabling policies and laws and to develop compensation mechanisms for environmental services and goods provided by mountain areas. Lowland countries should also be involved in future mountain-related activities because highland-lowland relationships, flows of investment and other factors mean that countries with mountains cannot undertake sustainable mountain development in isolation. Support is also needed for

subregional and regional initiatives that enable countries to work together on the development and conservation of transboundary mountain ranges. Many countries lack the institutional environments, expertise and financial resources to implement and invest in sustainable mountain development. Education, training, institutional and human capacity-building, technology development and transfer, expert consultation and investment are required.

*Partnership support*

73. The strengthening of partnerships and, in particular, support for the development of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, provide opportunities to enhance the effectiveness and focus of common efforts to implement chapter 13. However, these mechanisms require improved leadership and coordination, mountain-specific information databases, communication and information-sharing, monitoring and evaluation to achieve lasting results. The scope of the International Year of Mountains was in many cases limited by the resources made available. This highlights a wider and continuing constraint on effective implementation of chapter 13 and on maintaining and building upon the investment in the Year. Mountain regions should play key roles in addressing the world's social, environmental and economic problems. However, this requires increased and more effectively applied investment. Greater and more effective mobilization of financial resources for the implementation of sustainable mountain development programmes and activities which have been proposed at all levels is a major challenge still to be met.

# VII. Recommendations

74. **Significant progress has been achieved by the International Year of Mountains. It enabled crucial steps to be taken to heighten awareness about the importance of mountains to life on Earth and served as a catalyst for long-term, effective action to implement chapter 13, as intended. But much action is still needed. The International Year of Mountains is over but the challenges facing mountain environments and mountain peoples remain. The present momentum needs to be sustained in order to consolidate and build on results achieved so far. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following courses of action that could be taken by Governments:**

(a) **Encouraging the United Nations system to enhance efforts to strengthen inter-agency collaboration to achieve more effective implementation of chapter 13, Agenda 21 and paragraph 42 of the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation;**

(b) **Supporting the continued establishment and development of mountain-related national committees, focal points and other multi-stakeholder mechanisms at the national level for sustainable mountain development;**

(c) **Supporting national efforts to develop goals and strategic plans for the sustainable development of mountains, as well as enabling policies and laws, programmes and projects;**

(d) **Supporting transboundary approaches to sustainable development of mountain ranges and information-sharing;**

**(e) Promoting the production of mountain disaggregated information and the establishment of databases to capitalize on knowledge to support interdisciplinary research, programmes and projects for informed decision-making and planning;**

**(f) Supporting the development and implementation of global, regional and national communications programmes to build on the awareness and momentum for change established by the International Year of Mountains;**

**(g) Supporting capacity-building and education programmes to enhance awareness of good practices in sustainable mountain development and the nature of relationships between highland and lowland areas;**

**(h) Supporting the strengthening of mountain women's right to resources and their role in their communities and cultures, and giving consideration to the recommendations of the Thimpu Declaration of the Celebrating Mountain Women conference;**

**(i) Supporting the efforts of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions and the implementation of the Bishkek Mountain Platform at the international, regional and national levels and encouraging countries, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to join the Partnership;**

**(j) Encouraging donor and United Nations mechanisms, such as the Global Environment Facility and the Global Mechanism (in dryland mountains), as well as private-sector investment in sustainable mountain development and the conservation of mountain ecosystems.**

*Notes*

[1] The former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

[2] The International Year of Mountains Focus Group is comprised of representatives of Austria, Bhutan, Bolivia, Ethiopia, France, Guatemala, Iceland, Italy, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Peru, Slovenia and Switzerland.

[3] A formal proposal for a new International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions was finalized during the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Bali, Indonesia, 27 May-June 2002).

[4] As of June 2003, 32 countries, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 25 major groups had become members of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions.

[5] In 2003, this was renamed the Mountain Focus Group.